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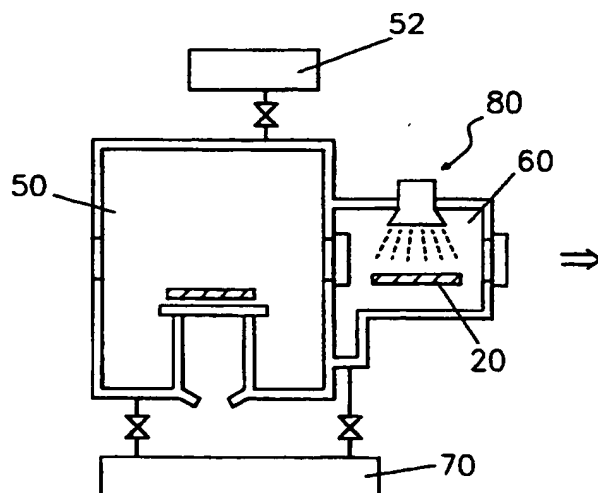
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UK CL (Edition O) B6J JMG2 JMX
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Online databases: WPI

(54) Dry etcher with removal of gas from wafer prior to unloading

(57) A wafer dry etcher includes a loadlock chamber 60 that controls the etching atmosphere before and after the wafer is loaded and unloaded from the etching chamber 50, and a pump 70 that purges the reaction gas out of the two chambers after the wafer is etched. A heater 80 or a water cleaning device (90, Fig 5) prevents any residual reaction gas remaining in the chambers from condensing on the wafer when the wafer is exposed to ambient atmosphere after exiting the loadlock chamber. The heater may be a UV or halogen lamp or electric. The heater or cleaning device may be disposed in the etching or the loadlock chambers.

FIG.2



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FIG.1(Prior Art)

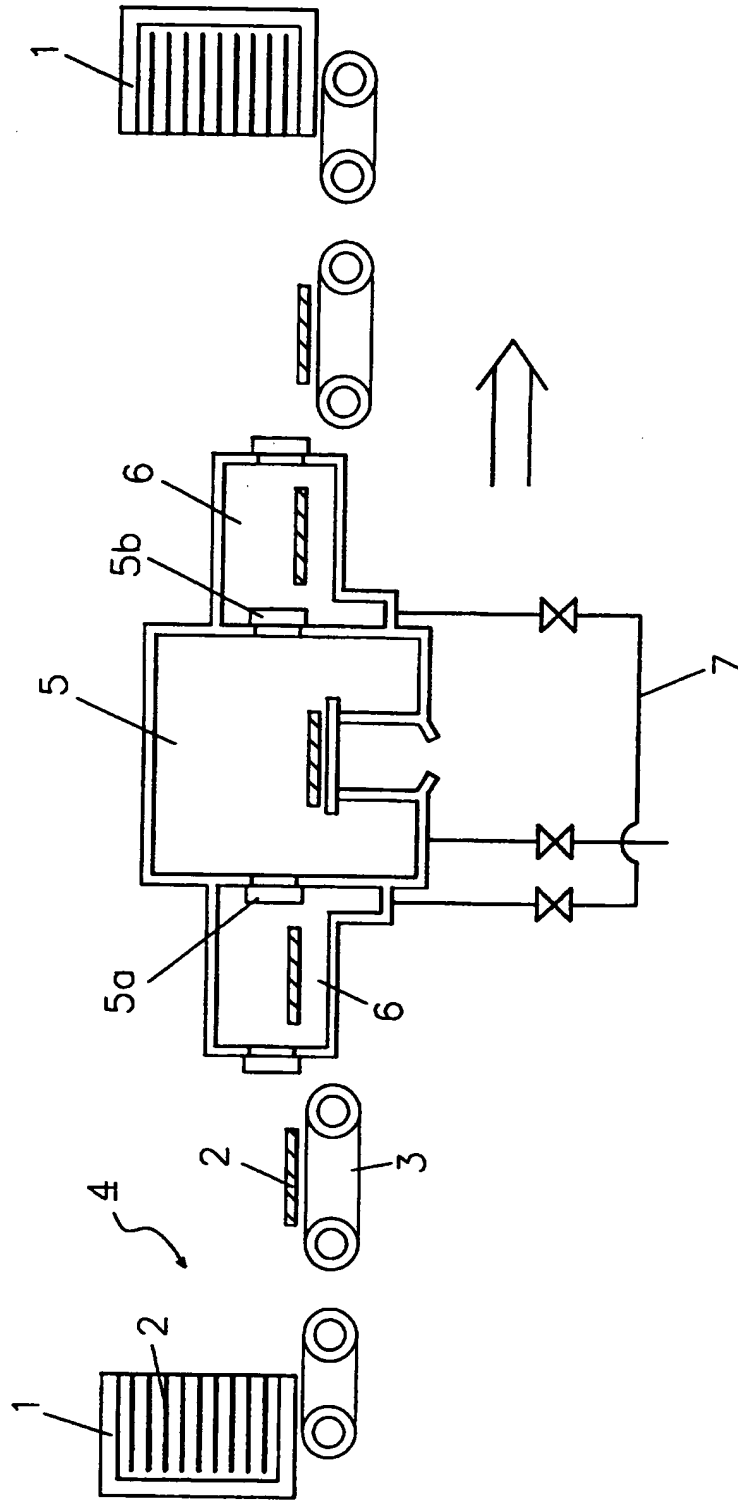


FIG.2

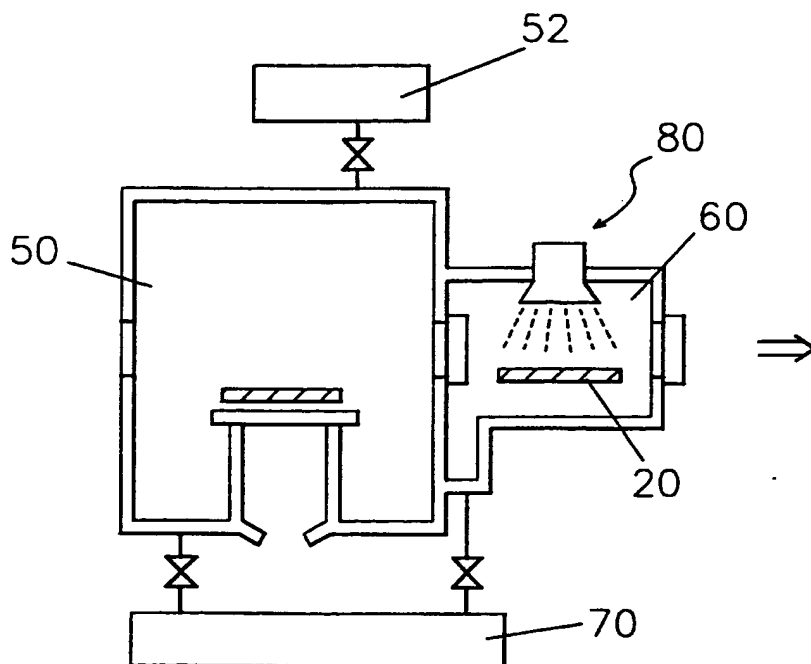


FIG.3

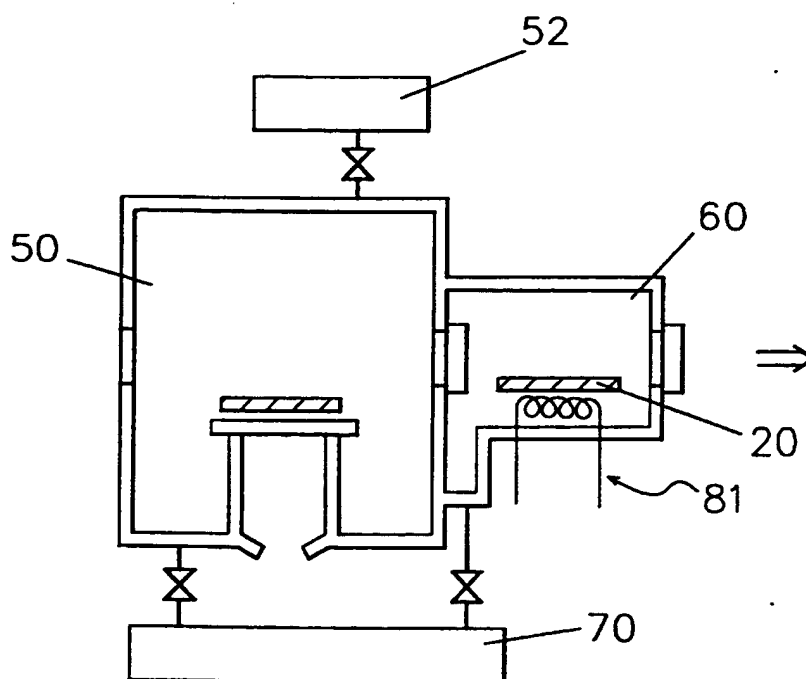


FIG. 4

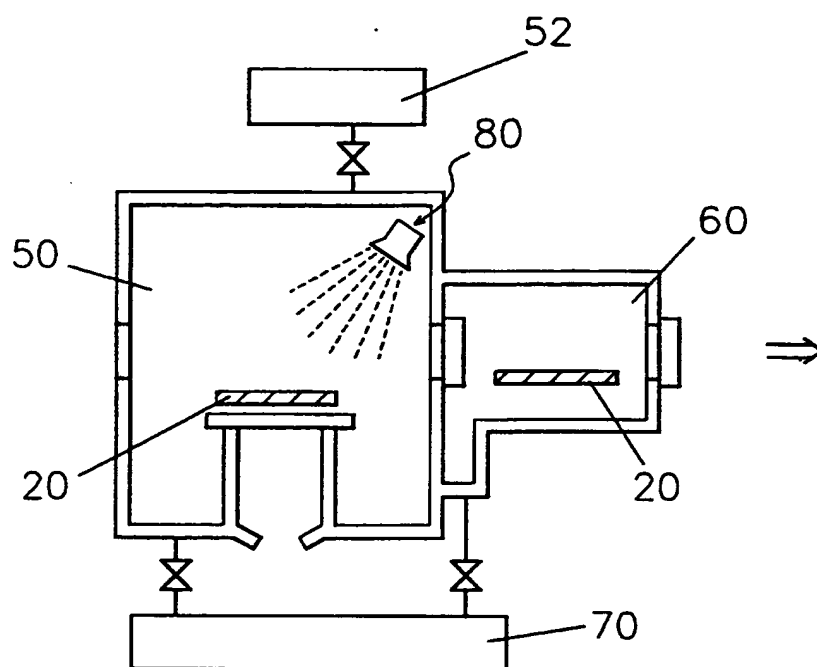
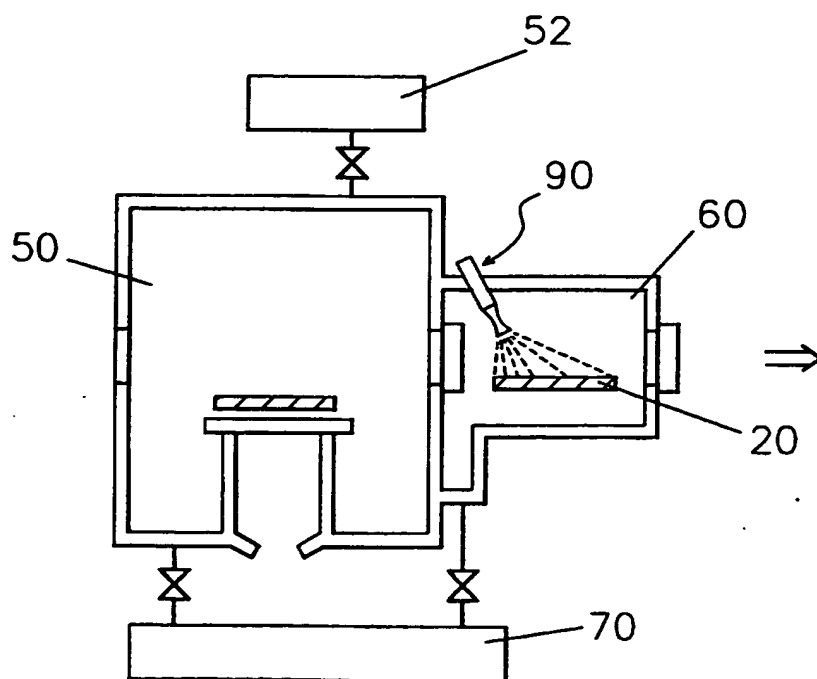


FIG. 5



DRY ETCHER APPARATUS AND METHOD OF PREVENTING RESIDUAL REACTION GAS FROM CONDENSING ON WAFERS AFTER ETCHING

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a dry etcher for etching semiconductor devices, and more particularly, to a dry etcher and method of preventing the reaction gas remaining on a wafer after the wafer is etched from being condensed on the wafer, without having to resort to a separate device or a separate treatment method.

2. Description of the Prior Art

An etcher is an apparatus used in manufacturing semiconductor devices, which, according to the object of the process, selectively eliminates various thin films such as silicon film, polysilicon film, and silicon oxide film, formed under a photoresist film. The etching may be classified as wet etching using chemicals or dry etching using gas. The etcher apparatus would thus be referred to as a wet etcher and a dry etcher.

FIG. 1 schematically shows the construction of a conventional dry etcher.

Referring to FIG. 1, the conventional dry etcher includes a wafer carrier 4, an etching chamber 5, loadlock chambers 6, and a gas discharger 7.

The wafer carrier 4 loads wafers 2 from a wafer cassette 1 and carries the wafers 2 via a conveyer 3 into the loadlock chamber 6. A reaction gas is input into the etching chamber 5, in which a high degree of vacuum is maintained. The loadlock chambers 6 are interconnected to the etching chamber 5 through entrances 5a and 5b. The loadlock

chambers 6 are at approximately the same environment as that in the etching chamber 5.

The gas discharger 7 pumps/purges out the reaction gas remaining in the loadlock chamber 6 and etching chamber 5 after the etching process is completed, so as to maintain the high degree of vacuum in the loadlock chamber 6 and etching chamber 5.

5 When etching polysilicon films and the like by means of the dry etcher as described above, Cl_2 , HBr , or the like is usually used as the reaction gas. Such gases exhibit a strong tendency to condense when they are exposed to an atmospheric state. Although, the gas discharger 7 seeks to pump/purge out the reaction gas remaining in the loadlock chamber 6 and etching chamber 5 after the etching process, some portion of
10 the reaction gas still remains that is condensed and liquified on the wafers. The wafers containing the liquified gas are then subjected to the succeeding manufacturing process.

However, such condensed and liquified gas on the wafers must be eliminated because it can degrade the quality of the semiconductor as well as cause downstream manufacturing process problems. Generally, a separate device or a separate process is
15 employed to eliminate the condensed and liquified gas. Such separate devices or processes, however, cause delays in the manufacturing process and increase the cost of manufacturing a semiconductor device.

In light of the foregoing, there exists a need for an etcher and method of preventing gas remaining on a wafer after the wafer is etched from being condensed on
20 the wafer, without having to resort to a separate device or a separate treatment method.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes one or more of the above described problems of the prior art. Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a dry etcher that prevents the reaction gas remaining on a wafer after the etching process from condensing on the wafer, without having to employ a separate device or a separate treatment method.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a method for dry etching a wafer, which prevents the reaction gas remaining on a wafer after the etching process from condensing on the wafer, without having to employ a separate device or a separate treatment method.

To achieve these and other objects, the dry etcher of the present invention comprises an etching chamber, a loadlock chamber, and a means for preventing residual reaction gas from being condensed on the wafer. More specifically, the dry etcher comprises an etching chamber having a wafer loaded therein; a supply means for supplying a reaction gas to the etching chamber to etch a thin film on the wafer; a loadlock chamber for controlling an etching atmosphere before and after the wafer is loaded in and unloaded from the etching chamber; means for pumping the reaction gas out of the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber after the thin film is etched; and means for preventing any residual reaction gas remaining in the etching chamber and loadlock chamber from being condensed on the wafer when the wafer is exposed to ambient atmosphere after exiting the loadlock chamber.

Preferably, the means for preventing any residual reaction gas from being condensed is a heater or a cleaner disposed in the etching chamber or the loadlock

chamber. This residual reaction gas remaining on the wafer is then pumped out of the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber.

In another aspect, there is provided a dry etching method for preventing residual reaction gas from condensing on a wafer etched by a dry etcher, the dry etcher having an etching chamber and a loadlock chamber, the method comprising the steps of: (a) loading a wafer in the etching chamber; (b) supplying a reaction gas into the etching chamber while maintaining a high degree of vacuum in the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber; (c) etching the wafer in the etching chamber; (d) discharging the reaction gas out of the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber; and (e) heating a residual reaction gas simultaneously with step (d) so as to activate any residual reaction gas remaining on the wafer after the wafer is etched, thereby preventing the residual reaction gas from condensing on the wafer when exposed to an ambient atmosphere when the wafer is unloaded from the loadlock chamber after being etched.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above object, and other features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent by describing in detail preferred embodiments thereof with reference to the attached drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a schematic constructional view of a conventional dry etcher;

FIG. 2 is a schematic constructional view of a dry etcher for eliminating residual reaction gas remaining on a wafer according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a schematic constructional view of a dry etcher for eliminating residual reaction gas remaining on a wafer according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a schematic constructional view of a dry etcher for eliminating residual reaction gas remaining on a wafer according to a third embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 5 is a schematic constructional view of a dry etcher for eliminating residual reaction gas remaining on a wafer according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Several preferred embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings hereinafter, with like elements being referred to by like reference numerals.

FIGs. 2 through 5 are four schematic constructional views of dry etchers for eliminating residual reaction gas remaining on a wafer according to the first through fourth embodiments of the present invention.

Referring to FIG. 2, the dry etcher includes an etching chamber 50 under a high degree of vacuum in which a wafer 20 is loaded by a carrier (not shown) and etched. A loadlock chamber 60 controls the etching environment before and after the wafer is loaded in and unloaded from the etching chamber 50 by maintaining a high degree of vacuum nearly equal to that in the etching chamber 50. A gas supplier 52 is connected

to the etching chamber 50 and supplies a reaction gas thereto such as, for example, Cl₂ or HBr.

A gas discharger 70, respectively connected to the etching chamber 50 and the loadlock chamber 60, pumps/purges out the reaction gas in the loadlock chamber 60 and the etching chamber 50 after the etching process is completed, so as to maintain the high degree of vacuum in the loadlock chamber 60 and the etching chamber 50.

The dry etcher also includes a means for preventing any residual reaction gas remaining on the wafer from condensing. Specifically, a heater 80, such as an ultraviolet ray lamp or a halogen lamp, is disposed in the loadlock chamber 60. The heater 80 heats the residual reaction gas remaining therein by means of light energy to thereby activate the remaining gas so that the remaining gas on the wafer 20 does not condense when exposed to the atmosphere.

In a second embodiment of the present invention as shown in FIG. 3, the means for preventing any residual reaction gas remaining on the wafer from condensing is an electric heater 81 that heats the residual gas in the loadlock chamber 60 by electric energy instead of the light energy as in the first embodiment. In FIGs. 2 and 3, the remaining reference numerals refer to the same or like parts.

In a third embodiment of the present invention as shown in FIG. 4, the heater 80, such as an ultraviolet rays lamp, is disposed directly in the etching chamber 50 instead of the loadlock chamber 60 as in the first embodiment. The heater 80 heats any residual gas remaining in the etching chamber 50.

According to a fourth embodiment of the present invention as shown in FIG. 5, a

cleaner 90 is disposed in the loadlock chamber 60 instead of the heater 80 or 81 as set forth in the first and second embodiments. The cleaner 90 cleans the wafer 20 by means of deionized water.

In each of the various dry etcher embodiments of the present invention as
5 described above, the wafer 20 is carried by the carrier (not shown) and loaded in the etching chamber 50. Thereafter, the wafer 20 is etched under a high degree of vacuum by reacting with the reaction gas supplied from the gas supplier 52 into the etching chamber 50.

Thereafter, the gas discharger 70 pumps/purges out the reaction gas remaining in
10 the loadlock chamber 60 and the etching chamber 50 after the etching process. In this case, the heaters 80 or 81, disposed in either the loadlock chamber 60 or the etching chamber 50, heat any residual gas remaining in the chambers to thereby activate molecular movement of the gas. Likewise, this same result is achieved when the wafer 20 is cleaned by the cleaner 90 instead of being heated by the heaters 80 or 81.

Therefore, the remaining gas does not condense on the wafer 20 even when the wafer 20
15 is exposed to the atmosphere after exiting the loadlock chamber 60.

As described above, in the dry etcher according to the present invention, the remaining gas does not condense on the wafer when it is exposed to the atmosphere after the etching process. Therefore, the dry etcher according to the present invention
20 does not require a separate device to eliminate the remaining gas, and thereby improving the yield of the manufactured semiconductor devices.

Further, since the present invention does not require a separate device to

eliminate the remaining gas, it is very effective in improving a semiconductor manufacturing system, in particular, a manufacturing system that employs multi-functional chambers. Multi-functional chambers are chambers whose functions are diversified as the wafers become larger and more highly integrated.

5 In the drawings and specification, there have been disclosed typical preferred embodiments of the invention and, although specific terms are employed, they are used in a generic and descriptive sense only and not for purposes of limitation, it being understood that the scope of the present invention is set forth in the following claims and their equivalents.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A dry etcher for etching a thin film on a wafer, the dry etcher comprising:
an etching chamber having the wafer loaded therein;
a supply means for supplying a reaction gas to said etching chamber to etch the

5 thin film on the wafer;

a loadlock chamber for controlling an etching atmosphere before and after the
wafer is loaded in and unloaded from the etching chamber;

means for pumping the reaction gas out of the etching chamber and the loadlock
chamber after the thin film is etched; and

10 means for preventing any residual reaction gas remaining in the etching chamber
and loadlock chamber from being condensed on the wafer when the wafer is exposed to
ambient atmosphere after exiting the loadlock chamber.

2. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said means for pumping
pumps the residual reaction gas out of the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber.

15 3. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the means for preventing is
disposed in the loadlock chamber.

4. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the means for preventing
comprises an ultraviolet ray lamp for heating and activating the residual reaction gas by

using light energy.

5. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the means for preventing comprises a halogen lamp for heating and activating the residual reaction gas by using light energy.

5 6. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the means for preventing comprises an electric heater for heating and activating the residual reaction gas by using electrical energy.

7. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the means for preventing comprises a cleaner for cleaning the wafer in the loadlock chamber, thereby eliminating
10 the residual reaction gas from the wafer.

8. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the cleaner uses deionized water to clean the wafer.

9. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the means for preventing is disposed in the etching chamber.

15 10. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the means for preventing comprises an ultraviolet ray lamp for heating and activating the residual reaction gas by

using light energy.

11. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the means for preventing comprises a halogen lamp for heating and activating the residual reaction gas by using light energy.

5 12. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the means for preventing comprises an electric heater for heating and activating the residual reaction gas by using electrical energy.

13. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the means for preventing comprises a cleaner for cleaning the wafer in the reaction chamber, thereby eliminating
10 the residual reaction gas from the wafer.

14. A dry etcher as claimed in Claim 13, wherein the cleaner uses deionized water to clean the wafer.

15. A dry etching method for preventing a residual reaction gas from condensing on a wafer etched by a dry etcher, the dry etcher having an etching chamber
15 and a loadlock chamber, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) loading a wafer in the etching chamber;

(a) supplying a reaction gas into the etching chamber while maintaining a high

degree of vacuum in the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber;

(b) etching the wafer in the etching chamber;

(c) discharging the reaction gas out of the etching chamber and the loadlock chamber; and

5 (d) heating a residual reaction gas simultaneously with step (d) so as to activate any residual reaction gas remaining on the wafer after the wafer is etched, thereby preventing the residual reaction gas from condensing on the wafer when exposed to an ambient atmosphere when the wafer is unloaded from the loadlock chamber after being etched.

10 16. The dry etching method as claimed in Claim 15, further comprising the step of discharging the residual reaction gas from the etching and loadlock chambers.

17. A dry etcher substantially as herein described with reference to Figures 2-5 of the accompanying drawings.

18. A dry etching method substantially as herein described with reference to Figures 2-5 of the accompanying drawings.



Application No: GB 9706347.3
Claims searched: 1-18

Examiner: Graham Russell
Date of search: 8 May 1997

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.O): B6J (JMG2, JMX)

Int Cl (Ed.6): H01J 37/32; H01L 21/3065

Other: Online: WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

| Category | Identity of document and relevant passage | Relevant to claims |
|----------|---|--------------------|
| | None | |

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